

The Old Paths

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"If These Men Understood, Why Can't We?"

Jarrod Jacobs

This article will be a little different than most articles that have been written in this bulletin. This is because I am going to cite the words of four well-known men. The purpose of this is to make a point that the religious world seems to have overlooked. Using these quotes does not mean that these men were infallible, or that they were inspired of God. What it means is that we *can* understand the Bible alike, and that we can all speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10) when we simply follow the Bible (I Pet. 4:11). Please consider the following:

Baptism Saves Us:

John Calvin (Presbyterian):

"For he commands all who believe to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Therefore, those who have imagined that baptism is nothing more than a mark or sign by which we profess our religion before men, as soldiers wear the insignia of their sovereign as a mark of their profession, have not considered that which was the principal thing in baptism; which is, that we ought to receive it with this promise, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" — Mark 16:16" ("Institute," Book IV, chapter 13).

The Lord's Supper:

John Wesley (Methodist):

"I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day" ("Letters to America," 1784).

Wearing Religious Names Other Than "Christian":

Martin Luther:

"I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for any one. St. Paul (I Cor. 1:13) would not have any should call themselves of Paul or of Peter, but of Christ. How, then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after Him from whom our doctrine comes" (Life of Luther, By Stork, p. 289).

John Wesley (Methodist):

"Would to God that all party names and un-Scriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of the common Master to hear His Word, imbibe His spirit and to transcribe His life in our own." He also wished that "the very name (Methodist, JJ) might never be mentioned more, but be buried in eternal oblivion" (Universal Knowledge, Vol. IX, p. 540).

C.H. Spurgeon (Baptist):

"I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name last forever" (Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. I, p. 168).

There are other quotes we could cite as well, but these are enough to show us that these men had a clear understanding of such passages as Mark 16:16; Acts 11:26; Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 2:42, 20:7; I Peter 3:21; I Peter 4:16 and other similar passages. It also shows us that *we* can have the same knowledge and understanding if we will but study God's word and apply it (II Tim. 2:15).

The question remains that if these men (who were either the founders, or prominent members in the various denominations that exist today) could understand God's word concerning these issues, why can't people today understand God's word, too? The truth is that they (and we) can understand God's word alike (Eph. 3:4, 5:17). Perhaps the problem was best summed up when Christ said, "*Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them*" (Matt. 13:14-15; also Acts 26:27-28; Isa. 6:9).

It has been rightly said "It doesn't matter what you know, but how you feel about it!" How do *you* feel about God's word? Do you respect it as the revealed

will of God through the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 2:20-21)? It will judge us one day (Jn. 12:48). Are you ready for the Judgment day? Are you willing to take God at His word, follow His will and simply be a Christian (Jn. 14:15, 15:14; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 11:26; II Jn. 9)?

If those men in years gone by could understand God's word on different subjects, I know WE can understand that word today (Eph. 5:17)! It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and will stand forever (Ps. 119:89). Do we respect God's word? Are we willing to honestly accept what God has said on all matters? Let us consider that carefully (II Cor. 13:5).

"If there was no error in principle or practice, then controversy, which is only another name for opposition to error, real or supposed, would be unnecessary. If it were lawful, or if it were benevolent, to make a truce with error, then opposition to it would be both unjust and unkind. If error were innocent and harmless, then we might permit it to find its own quietus, or to immortalize itself. But so long as it is confessed that error is more or less injurious to the welfare of society, individually and collectively considered, then no man can be considered benevolent who does not set his face against it. In proportion as a person is intelligent and benevolent, he will be controversial, if error exists around him. Hence the Prince of Peace never sheathed the sword of the Spirit while he lived. He drew it on the banks of the Jordan and threw the scabbard away."

Alexander Campbell — 1830

If Unconditional Election Is True

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One of the creeds of Calvinism is the doctrine of "unconditional election." It says that God unconditionally elected certain ones to be saved and those not elected to be damned. It says that Christ only died for the elect, not for the non-elect. If that doctrine is true:

1. Who is "in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:22)? Certainly not the elect, for they cannot be lost, and assuredly not the non-elect, for they are not merely "in danger of hell fire," they are bound for it by the eternal decree of God! So, to whom does Matthew 5:22 apply?
2. Where all those who died in the flood "non-elect"? Were Noah and his family the only "elect" ones?
3. Why did Paul say "the weak brother...for whom Christ died" may "perish" (1 Cor. 8:11). Calvinism says the elect are those "for whom Christ died" and that they cannot perish. So, if the doctrine be true, why did Paul imply that they might?
4. How could anyone "receive ... the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1)? The elect could not, for they are eternally secure. The non-elect

could not because they are not recipients of grace. If Calvinism be true, of whom was Paul speaking when he urged them to "receive not the grace of God in vain"?

5. How could anyone "fail of the grace of God," or come "short of" it (Heb. 12:15)? (See points under number four above.)
6. Why did Jesus say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," when he knew the elect could not perish and that the non-elect could not be saved (Lk. 13:3, 5)?
7. How could Paul say that Andronicus and Junia "were in Christ before me," if they were all chosen of God from before the foundation of the world (Rom. 16:7)?
8. Why did Jesus say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," when he knew the elect did not need to come to him and that the non-elect could not come to him (Matt. 11:28)?
9. Why, if eternal salvation is secured by an unconditional election, are all the judgment scenes in the Bible based on what a man has done and how has he lived and not on the basis of an unconditional election of God (Matt. 16:27; 25:32-46; Jn. 5:28, 29; Rom. 2:6-11; Rev. 20:12-15)?
10. Why did Peter exhort brethren to make their "calling and election sure" if there was no uncertainty about it (2 Pet. 1:10)?

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